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PTQ6780

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ACTION INR-00

RELEASED IN FULL

INFO LOG-00 NP-00 ACQ-00 DODE-00 WHA-00 DS-00 UTED-00
VC-00 TEDE-00 VCE-00 AC-01 NSAE-00 ACE-00 IRM-00
TEST-00 DSCC-00 DRL-02 NFAT-00 SAS-00 /003W
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R 052151Z MAR 02
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4949
INFO CIA WASHDC
DIA WASHDC
NSC WASHDC
USCINCSO MIAMI FL
AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY QUITO
USINT HAVANA

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INR FOR COZART
NSC FOR AMBASSADOR MAISTO
USCINCSO FOR POLAD

SENSITIVE

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E.O. 12958: NA
TAGS: PREL, PGOV, VE
SUBJ: LABOR, BUSINESS AND CHURCH ANNOUNCE TRANSITION
PACT

1. (SBU) SUMMARY: WITH MUCH FANFARE, THE VENEZUELAN GREAT AND GOOD ASSEMBLED ON MARCH 5 TO HEAR REPRESENTATIVES OF THE CONFEDERATION OF VENEZUELAN WORKERS, THE FEDERATION OF BUSINESS CHAMBERS, AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH PRESENT THEIR "BASES FOR A DEMOCRATIC ACCORD," TEN PRINCIPLES ON WHICH TO GUIDE A TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT. INITIALLY INTERPRETED IN THE PRESS AND SOME CIRCLES AS PERHAPS A BASIS OF DIALOGUE WITH THE CHAVEZ GOVERNMENT--THE DOCUMENT WAS ANNOUNCED, BUT NOT RELEASED, LAST WEEK--THIS ACCORD WAS CLEARLY INTENDED FOR THE OPPOSITION FORCES' EXCLUSIVE USE. IT WAS

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: JOHN L MILLS
DATE/CASE ID: 30 AUG 2004 200400110

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ENTHUSIASTICALLY RECEIVED BY THE ASSEMBLED "ESCUALIDOS," WHO INTERRUPTED THE SPEAKERS OFTEN WITH ANTI-CHAVEZ CHANTS. THIS ACCORD REPRESENTS AN IMPORTANT STEP FOR THE OPPOSITION, WHICH HAS BEEN QUICK TO CONDEMN CHAVEZ BUT HAD SO FAR OFFERED NO VISION OF ITS OWN. END SUMMARY.

TEN POINTS FOR A DEMOCRATIC ACCORD

2. (U) WITH MUCH FANFARE, THE VENEZUELAN GREAT AND GOOD ASSEMBLED ON MARCH 5 IN CARACAS'S ESMERALDA AUDITORIUM TO HEAR REPRESENTATIVES OF THE CONFEDERATION OF VENEZUELAN WORKERS (CTV), THE FEDERATION OF BUSINESS CHAMBERS (FEDECAMARAS), AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH PRESENT THEIR "BASES FOR A DEMOCRATIC ACCORD"--TEN PRINCIPLES ON WHICH TO GUIDE
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A TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT. THE EXISTENCE OF THIS ACCORD WAS ANNOUNCED LAST WEEK AND HAS SINCE DRAWN MUCH SPECULATION ABOUT WHETHER IT WAS INTENDED AS THE BASIS FOR A POST-CHAVEZ GOVERNMENT OR AS A LAST-DITCH EFFORT TO PROMOTE A DIALOGUE WITH THE GOVERNMENT. IN HIS COMBATIVE CENTERPIECE ADDRESS, CTV PRESIDENT CARLOS ORTEGA DISPELLED ANY REMAINING DOUBTS; THIS ACCORD IS "A PACT FOR US," HE EMPHASIZED, TO GUIDE US THROUGH THE TRANSITION AND TO ESTABLISH A "GOVERNMENT OF DEMOCRATIC UNITY." THE CROWD GREETED THESE REMARKS WITH ROUSING ANTI-CHAVEZ CHANTS.

3. (U) BESIDES ATTRACTING EXTENSIVE MEDIA COVERAGE, THE SPEECHES ON THE ACCORD WERE BEING BROADCAST, WE WERE TOLD, BY ALL NON-GOVERNMENTAL TV STATIONS. FR. LUIS UGALDE, S.J., RECTOR OF THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF ANDRES BELLO, EXPLAINED HOW THIS ACCORD BEGAN WITH CONFERENCES BETWEEN BUSINESS AND LABOR HOSTED BY THE CATHOLIC EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE LAST DECEMBER. JESUS URBIETA, FORMER CTV INTERIM PRESIDENT AND HEAD OF THE CONFEDERATION'S THINK TANK, READ THE MAIN POINTS, WHICH CAN BE SUMMARIZED BRIEFLY:

--OVERCOMING POVERTY BY PROVIDING MORE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES. THIS INCLUDES "FIGHTING POPULIST VISIONS THAT FOOL THE POPULAR SECTORS WITH MESSIANIC OR ERRONEOUS VISIONS OF THE REALITY OF THE COUNTRY."

--FORGING NATIONAL UNITY THAT INCLUDES EVERYONE IN THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS AND INFORMAL SECTORS IN THE NATIONAL ECONOMY.

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--GUARANTEEING THE STATE OF LAW, THE PROPER BALANCE BETWEEN THE STATE AND SOCIETY, DECENTRALIZATION, AND THE AUTONOMY OF GOVERNMENTAL INSTITUTIONS. THIS CLAUSE INCLUDES THE DEEPENING OF DEMOCRACY IN BOTH FEDECAMARAS AND THE CTV.

--REJECTING ALL FORMS OF VIOLENCE AND THREATS TO THE CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER AND AFFIRMING DIALOGUE, DISCUSSION, AND PARTICIPATION AS THE PROPER WAY TO SETTLE DIFFERENCES.

--RESPECTING AND REINFORCING THE PROPER ROLE OF THE NATIONAL ARMED FORCE AND ITS SUBORDINATION TO CIVILIAN AUTHORITY. (BIG APPLAUSE.)

--ESTABLISHING EFFICIENCY AND TRANSPARENCY IN PUBLIC POLICY, AND DOING AWAY WITH "THE PERVERSE PRACTICES OF USING PUBLIC FUNDS AS BOOTY," SELLING OFFICES, OR PUTTING INCOMPETENTS IN PUBLIC OFFICE FOR REASONS OF CRONYISM OR PARTISAN POLITICS.

--MAKING THE COMMON GOOD THE PROPER OBJECT OF THE STATE'S

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| | UTED-00 | VC-00 | TEDE-00 | VCE-00 | AC-01 | DCP-01 | NSAE-00 |
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FUNCTION.

--PROMOTING COOPERATION BETWEEN LABOR AND CAPITAL, AND THE
RIGHT OF CONSUMERS, TOO.

--RECUPERATING THE INTERNATIONAL IMAGE OF VENEZUELA.

--STRIVING AGAINST CORRUPTION--"WE NEED MORAL LEADERSHIP
THAT PREACHES BY EXAMPLE AND WITH ITS ACTIONS"--AND
PROMOTING "PUBLIC AUSTERITY" TO PREVENT THE SQUANDERING OF
RESOURCES.

4. (U) FOR THE MOST PART, THE SPEAKERS AVOIDED DISCUSSING
THE POLITICS OF THE MOMENT, AND THEY HAD NO NEED TO POINT
OUT HOW THEIR POINTS CONTRAST WITH THE ACTUAL
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHAVEZ GOVERNMENT. FEDECAMARAS
PRESIDENT PEDRO CARMONA DID CALL FOR THE RESIGNATION OF THE
PDVSA'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS, AND AT ONE POINT ORTEGA
DENOUNCED CHAVEZ BY NAME. OTHERWISE, THE SPEAKERS
EMPHASIZED THEIR ACCORD AS "A SHARED VISION" AND "A SIGNAL
OF HOPE" FOR VENEZUELAN PREOCCUPIED WITH WHAT WAS DEEMED
"A TRUE NATIONAL EMERGENCY."

COMMENT: ANOTHER PIECE FALLS INTO PLACE
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5. (SBU) THIS ACCORD REPRESENTS AN IMPORTANT STEP FOR THE
OPPOSITION, WHICH HAS BEEN ALWAYS QUICK TO CONDEMN CHAVEZ
BUT HAD SO FAR OFFERED NO COMPREHENSIVE VISION OF ITS OWN.
BUT ONCE AGAIN, IN THE ABSENCE OF A SINGLE OPPOSITION PARTY

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OR FIGURE THAT CAN RALLY PUBLIC SENTIMENT, BUSINESS AND LABOR LEADERS, WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, HAVE STEPPED INTO THE BREACH. THE OPPOSITION PARTIES NOW WILL CERTAINLY HASTEN TO ENDORSE THIS ACCORD, WHICH, THOUGH SOMEWHAT VAGUE AND FEEL-GOODY, MAY WELL FORM THE FRAME OF REFERENCE AND CODE OF CONDUCT FOR A TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT. THEY MAY FIND IT DIFFICULT, HOWEVER, TO RECAPTURE THE SPOTLIGHT FROM ORTEGA AND CARMONA, THE TWO UNLIKELY ALLIES BUT INDISPENSABLE LEADERS OF THE ANTI-CHAVISTA OPPOSITION.

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